THE MIRAGE.

Conditions That Make Possible This Beautiful Illusion.

About that natural phenomenon, the mirage, much mystery clung in days of old, but science explains it as readily as the rainbow.

The fata morgana of the strait of Messina and the specter of the Brocken were nothing more in sober reality than mere mirage.

A mirage may occur at any place where the denser stratum of air is placed above the lighter stratum, thus refracting the rays of light, the common surface of the two stratums acting as a mirror.

In looming mirages distant objects show an extravagant increase in vertical height without alteration in breadth. Distant hummocks of ice are thus magnified into immense towers and pinnacles, and a ship is sometimes abnormally drawn out until it appears twelve or thirteen times as high as it is long. Rocks are seen drawn up to ten or twelve times their proper height. Houses as well as human beings and animals appear in like exaggerated shape.

Another form of mirage is when a ship or some other object near the water seems greatly elongated and a second inverted image meets it from above.

Sometimes the proper image of the object is elevated far above the sea, while the second image strangely appears inverted beneath it, the whole surrounded by a sheet of sky which is mirrored and repeated within it.

In 1882 in the arctic region Captain Scoresby recognized by its inverted image in the air his father's ship, the Fame, which afterward proved to be seventeen miles beyond the visible horizon of his observation.

One August evening in 1806 Dr. Vince saw from Ramsgate, at which place only the tops of Dover castle towers are usually visible, the whole of the castle. It appeared as though lifted up and bodily placed on the near side of the intervening hill. So perfect was this illusion that the hill itself actually could not be seen through the figure.

Some forms of mirage are lateral as well as vertical, arising from unequal density of two contiguous vertical bodies of air. Thus on Lake Geneva a boat has been seen double, the two images some distance apart.

Persons have been duplicated in the same way. Any one on a hot day by placing his eye near to a heated wall may see lateral mirages of objects at a distance and nearly on a line with the wall.

Mirages are very frequent on deserts or the large sandy plains which abound in the southwestern states and territories. Many a panting wagon train has pushed on in joyous haste at the sight of a green grove or limpid lake, only to be cruelly disappointed at the fading away of the vision. Is it any wonder that the natives and Indians regard the phenomenon as the work of evil and tantalizing spirits?

Lake Ontario is famous for beautiful and wonderful mirages, during which the opposite shore of the lake is plainly visible from either side.—Pearson's.

Court Dwarfs.

Until about little more than a century ago dwarfs were frequently kept as court toys. Records of them might be multiplied almost indefinitely.

Bebe, the dwarf of Stanislaus, king of Poland, lived to be ninety years of age, dying in Paris in 1858, and is variously described as having measured thirty-five inches and twenty-three inches. Julia, niece of Augustus, had two dwarfs, each twenty-eight inches in height, and Henrietta Maria had two whose joint height was seven feet two inches. The Emperor Augustus had a dwarf named Lucius whose height was two feet and weight seventeen pounds. The last court dwarf in England was Coppernin, who belonged to the Princess of Wales, mother of George III.

An Isle of Man Oath.

What is regarded as the quaintest oath still in use is that taken by the high court judges in the Isle of Man, the terms of which are as follows: "By this book and the contents thereof and by the wonderful works that God hath miraculously wrought in the heaven above and the earth beneath in six days and six nights I do swear that I will, without respect of favor or friendship, loss or gain, consanguinity or affinity, envy or malice, execute the laws of this isle justly between party and party as indifferently as the herring backbone doth lie in the midst of the fish. So help me God and the contents of this book."

Selfishness.

Jones worked so hard and denied himself so much in order to pay his life insurance that he had neither the time nor the means to be sick, and he outlived all the beneficiaries, who were meanwhile engaged in the relatively unhealthy business of lying back and waiting for him to die. Moreover, in thinking of the matter he became convinced that he had a good deal of fun, after all—more fun, indeed, than most.

"I'm a terribly selfish fellow," exclaimed Jones guiltily.—Puck.

Politely Bounced.

A good example of the extremely courteous in public correspondence was the notice sent to Charles James Fox that he was no longer a member of the government of George III. It read thus: "His gracious majesty has been pleased to issue a new commission in which your name does not appear."

To cast away a good friend is like casting away one's life.—Aristotle.

A PLAGUE OF ANTS.

The Vicious Insects Are a Nuisance In Southwestern Africa.

"Ants—white, black and yellow—are a great nuisance in Nigeria," says Charles Partridge in "Cross River Natives." "They march from place to place in military formation. Some carry their young, others bear food, and scouts and a fighting escort are always on duty. Their column looks like a long black snake curving along the ground.

"They leave behind them a well formed road about four inches broad and half an inch deep, worn smooth by the tread of the countless throng.

"They do not bite when the sun is high, but woe betide the hapless wight who comes in their way at other times! While traveling through the bush you occasionally find them in possession of a section of the road. Perhaps you are in the midst of them before you discover the presence of your small but fierce adversary. The first man bitten yells out something meaning, "Ware ants!" and we all hurry forward, stamping vigorously. Those of us upon whom the little warriors have fastened tear off our clothes and nip the foes to death. My little black horse always wanted to turn back when he came to a column of ants. My dog Bob, a native, used to dance like a bear on hot bricks when the driver ants got between his paws and had to be held down while they were plucked out.

"One night I suddenly awoke with a feeling that something was amiss. All the household pets, such as snakes, lizards, rats, toads, centipeds and spiders, seemed to be bestirring themselves restlessly. No sooner had my foot touched the ground than I knew what it was, for a fierce bite told me that the driver ants were upon us.

"On lighting a candle I found a column marching across the floor and a whole regiment attacking my bed. I roused the assistant district commissioner, and eventually, using wisps of burning paper, we drove out the enemy. Fire or hot ashes are the best means to use for expelling them."

A HOTEL DINNER.

The Husband Ordered It, and His Wife Criticised It.

On the midnight train ride from town, where he and his wife had been entertaining one of his best patients at dinner and the theater, the suburban doctor spoke bitterly:

"What a dinner! And it cost $15. The cooking in these big hotels is atrocious. They smear sauces over everything. I suppose it is to hide poor materials."

"It isn't the fault of the cooking that our dinner was a failure. It was its selection that doomed it."

"What was the matter with the selection?"

"You should not have done the ordering. You have your meals chosen for you almost every day in the year. It is the women of people in our circumstances who ought to arrange the menus at restaurants. Look what you ordered! Bisque of lobster—a soup with a body of thick white sauce. Sweetbreads—cooked, as usual, with a cream dressing. Virginia ham with champagne sauce—a brown sauce as thick as molasses. Then for dessert you took a chance on pudding Reine Victoria—candied fruit and lady fingers swimming in soft custard."

"Well, how is a fellow to know? Lobster soup, sweetbreads, Virginia ham and pudding Reine Victoria—it sounds fine."

"But a woman knows that it is a wretched combination of splendid dishes. It is the woman's dull duty to choose menus for 365 days in the year. She learns a good deal about selection. Yet when a sum of money, equal to a week's food expenses, is to be squandered on one dinner at a hotel it is the man who seizes the menu and tries to look capable. He makes a failure frequently, as you did tonight. It would have been a pleasure for me to order a fifteen dollar dinner—a change from manipulating dinner for four on $1. But men feel too important in a restaurant to submit the menu to their wives for assistance."—Exchange.

He Came Back Hard.

"That boy," said the Billville farmer, "beats my time! Jest now when I quoted Scripter to him he come back at me hard!"

"You don't say!"

"Shore! I told him to git a hoe an' foller the furrow. 'Thar's gold in the land,' I said. An' what do you reckon he made answer?"

"You tell it."

"'Father,' he says, 'I don't keer fer the gold o' this here world. I've laid up treasure in heaven!'"—Atlanta Constitution.

Fair Warning.

Year after year an old farmer had listened in grim silence to the trains thundering by his land. Finally one day, his patience at an end, he dropped his plow and shook his fist at the passing express.

"Ye can puff an' blow all ye like, gol durn ye," he cried, "but I'm goin' to ride ye Saturday!"—Everybody's.

The Zones.

Teacher—How many zones are there? Small Boy—Six. Teacher—No; there are but five. However, you may name six if you can. Small Boy—Torrid north temperate, south temperate north frigid, south frigid and ozone.—Chicago News.

His Genius.

"Why do people think he's a genius? Nobody can understand what he's talking about."

"No, but he can make people believe that he does."—Exchange.

GAVE THE SALUTE.

The Old Soldier Obeyed the Command of the Young Officer.

At Siboney during the Spanish-American war a young lieutenant of a volunteer regiment was officer of the guard one day, and as he was strutting about in his new khaki uniform he noticed a man dressed in what looked like the cast off clothes of a private soldier coming toward him.

The man was apparently fifty-five to sixty years old, of dark complexion, with hair and mustache streaked with gray, and was clad in a faded blue army shirt, open at the neck, khaki trousers covered with mud tucked into boots in the same condition and a gray campaign hat much the worse for wear and having several holes cut in it for ventilating purposes.

He was strolling along, with his hands in his pockets, and passed the young lieutenant without a salute or a sign of recognition of his rank.

This was more than the young officer's dignity could stand, and he stopped the man with a sharp "Halt, there!"

The man halted and faced about, and the lieutenant asked:

"Are you in the army?"

"Yes, sir," was the reply.

"Regulars or volunteers?"

"Regulars, sir."

"Haven't you been in the service long enough to know that it is customary to salute when you meet an officer in uniform?"

"I know that, sir, but down here we've sort of overlooked salutes and ceremony."

"Well, I haven't, and I want you to understand it. Now, attention!"

The man stood at attention.

"Salute!"

The salute was given.

"How long have you been in the service?"

"About thirty-five years, sir."

"Well, you have learned something about army regulations and customs this morning. Remember who gave you the lesson and when you meet me in uniform salute. I am Lieutenant —— of the ——. Now, what's your name and regiment?"

The man who had received the lesson had been smiling slightly under his mustache. Now he straightened up, saluted again and replied:

"General Adna R. Chaffee, sir, commanding the —th division."

When the dazed lieutenant found the use of his tongue again and began to excuse himself the old general said kindly:

"That's all right, my boy. You were right. Of course you didn't know. I suppose I do look pretty rough, and an enlisted man should salute an officer, even if we do overlook it sometimes. Always stick as closely to regulations as that and you will make a good officer."

The old soldier nodded pleasantly to the still bewildered young man and walked away.—New York Times.

A Slight Difference.

Uncle Bob, who lived in Washington and worked at the war department, was at the old home for a few days. Little Ted was a devout worshiper and tagged about after his uncle all day long, listening to him and asking questions. Finally he delivered himself of an important matter.

"Uncle Bob," he said, "do you ever see the president in Washington?"

"Oh, yes; often. I see him nearly every day."

"Uncle Bob," asked Ted solemnly, after careful thought, "does the president see you?"—Woman's Home Companion.

Her Retort.

It is always gratifying to meet a person who is contented with his lot. For that reason it would be delightful to make the acquaintance of the woman who had the last word in a suffragist controversy. The writer of a suffragist communication in a newspaper wrote sadly that "woman is nothing but a female relative of man; the man is the noun, the woman is the preposition." "Well, what do I care?" was the triumphant retort. "The preposition governs the noun."—Youth's Companion.

Highly Encouraging.

One fine day, just as I was walking on, I got the trac (blue funk) and could not speak my lines. I turned hopelessly and with pleading eyes toward the leading lady, who could not go on with her part until I had spoken; but, for all help, she hissed at me from between her teeth. "Parle donc, petit animal!" (Go on, speak, you little beast.) Of such was the "encouragement" I received on one memorable occasion.—Coquelin's Reminiscences in London Telegraph.

Both Interested In Berkshires.

The Massachusetts maid was in a romantic mood. "I am dreaming," she murmured poetically, "dreaming of the dear old Berkshire hills of my native state."

"Berkshires?" echoed the Chicago youth, somewhat bewildered. "Er—was your father in the pork raising business?"

And the look that the Massachusetts maid gave him would have congealed radium.—Chicago News.

Atchison's Most Generous Man.

They tell of an Atchison man who was going down street with a girl. She was one of the kind who believes in the power of the gentle hint, and as they passed a candy store she said:

"Doesn't that candy smell good?"

"Yes," the man replied, "let's stop here and smell it awhile!"—Atchison Globe.

Better a boy in the schoolroom than two in a poolroom.—Chicago News.

THE LUMINOUS HALO.

Psychic Explanation of an Oft Witnessed Phenomenon.

I was summoned one day to the Saltpetriere in Paris to see a woman who lay in a bed in the dark. She was a woman whose body, nerves, brain, had been teased and tortured for years in psychic and occult experiment. What mental perturbation was racking that brain I did not know, and the physicians at her bedside did not know. With clinched hands and teeth and eyes open wide the woman lay there. Her breathing was irregular and not deep. What we saw was this: A luminous halo of a vague orange hue that circled her head, even as in the old pictures of martyred saints you see the heads crowned with faded gold. This halo was fluctuant. It came and went. It was a light that flickered, grew, faded, formed itself anew.

A miracle, this aureoled head?

If you want to call it that. Words are not of great importance. It was a miracle when it glowed around the head of a martyr tortured in the arena, so tortured by pain and fear that his dissociated psychic centers produced the phenomenon of the exteriorization of luminous energy.

Perhaps it were better to call it at once a miracle and a prescientific fact—a fact, that is, which is occult, but is in the way of becoming known.

I asked Dr. Frere what he thought of this miracle.

"I have often seen it," he said. The field of his experiments was the madhouse at Bicetre. There many neuropathic patients abide, and often in cases of severe headache or of religious ecstasy he has seen these fluctuant aureoles around the head.

"The rays are often twenty centimeters in extent, quite regular, forming a perfect aureole," he explained.

There is, then, a form of energy endowed with luminous properties emanating from the human body under certain conditions.—Vance Thompson in Hampton's Magazine.

THE LAND OF BIG GAME.

British East Africa as It Appears to the Hunter.

A brown village of thatched huts squatting in a trampled clearing of the forest and backed by thickset trees so closely laced with a living tapestry of woven green that the aching tropic sunlight can scarcely penetrate; slim, naked blacks slipping like shadows among the broad leaved bananas and rubber trees, staring furtively as your bearers file slowly past them; a lonely station far up or down river, where a haggard white man sits to receive tribute in the name of his trading company, marks an outpost of civilization in this jungle land. And through and under it all are the fevered glare of sunlight, the ceaseless drowsy whisper of the woods, the hot, dry scents of the parched earth, or, if the rains have come, all the land about will lie cloaked in steaming vapor, the sultry air as thick and humid as the air of a greenhouse at home. There you have the Kongo as the white man knows it—the Kongo or the jungle of Uganda. But all of this is only a part of what we have chosen to call and to picture as the dark continent.

For there, too, is the desert, widely different in all its aspects from Kongoland. On the slope of the rising ground that lifts from sea level at Mombasa and climbs to nearly 8,000 feet before it drops again to the lesser level of Victoria Nyanza is another vast waste as typical of Africa as this jungle country—the desert, as it is called, the plains of bush and grass. Six months of the year—from October to April—it lies half drowned under tropic rains. From April to September only occasional showers fall, and the wide plateau grills under the staring sunlight, all yellowing in the glare. Here upon these uplands is found the great variety of big game, the vast herds of wild things that have made and still make Africa the greatest shooting country in the world. This is British East Africa as the hunter knows it.—C. B. Taylor in Everybody's.

An Alibi.

The milkman stood before her nervously twirling his hat in his hands.

"So," she said sternly, "you have come at last."

"Yes, madam. You sent for me, I believe," he replied.

"I wished to tell you that I found a minnow in the milk yesterday morning."

"I am sorry, madam, but if the cows will drink from the brook instead of from the trough I cannot help it."—Harper's Weekly.

A Queer Dish.

A great dish at Egyptian harem feasts is that of a lamb roasted whole. After the manner of a nest of Chinese boxes, each smaller than the other, the lamb is stuffed with a whole turkey, the turkey with a chicken, the chicken with a pigeon, the pigeon with a quail and the quail with a becafico, the smallest bird known, except a humming bird. The lamb is roasted over a slow fire until it is almost ready to fall to pieces.

Try This.

Fasten a key to a string and suspend it by your thumb and finger, and it will oscillate like a pendulum. Let some one place his hand under the key, and it will change to a circular motion. Then let a third person place his hand upon your shoulder, and the key becomes stationary.—London Express.

The man who would rather be right than be president generally has his preference gratified.—Philadelphia Record.